

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 3151

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, CA

SUBJ: OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

1. SUMMARY: THIRTIETH PARLIAMENT CONVENES SEPT 30 FACING HEAVY AND COMPLICATED LEGISLATIVE CALANDAR. EVEN IF COMFORT-ABLE MAJORITY POSITION (141 OF 264 SEATS IN COMMONS), LIBERAL GOVT WILL BE HARD PRESSED TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL HEADWAY ON IMPORTANT LEGISLATION BEFORE CHRISTMAS RECESS. OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE STILL IN DISARRY FOLLOWING JULY 8 LOSSES. PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE (PC) LEADER STANFIELD HAS ANNOUNCED HE WILL RESIGN LEADERSHIP BUT HAS NOT NAMED A DATE, THOUGH PC SOURCES PREDICT A LEADERSHIP CONVENTION 1975. NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) LEADER LEWIS WAS DTAFEATED AND NDP MUST ALSO HOLD LEADERSHIP CONVENTION, IN WHICH PARLIAMENTARY LEADER EDWARD BROADBENT APPEARS LIKELY, BUT BY NO MEANS CERTAIN, TO SUCCEED LEWIS. SOCIAL CREDIT WON ONLY 11 SEATS AND CANNOT FORMALLY BE RECOGNIZED AS OPPOSITION PARTY (12 ARE REQUIRED) WITHOUT SPECIAL DISPENSATION. NEVER-THELESS PC, REDUCED IN NUMBERS, IS FREE FROM RESTRAINT IMPOSED IN PREVIOUS PARLIAMENT BY LIKELIHOOD IT MIGHT SHORTLY HAVE TO FORM GOVERNMENT, AND CAN THUS ADOPT MORE EXTREME POSITIONS. THERE ARE ALSO SIGNS THAT TRUDEAU, NEVER POPULAR IN COMMONS, MAY BE RETURNING TO

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"ARROGANCE" WHICH CHARACTERIZED LIBERAL ATTITUDES IN 1968-

72. IT PROBABLE THAT FORTHCOMING SESSION WILL BE ANYTHING BUT TRANQUIL. US-CANADIAN RELATIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY COME UP IN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION PERIOD. BUT IN VIEW OF THE BACKLOG OF OTHER BUSINESS, IT DOUBTFUL THAT NEW LEGISLATION AFFECTING US INTERESTS WILL BE OFFERED BEFORE CHRISTMAS. END SUMMARY.

2. CALENDAR. THRON SPEECH WILL BE DELIVERED BY ADMINIS-TRATOR LASKIN SEPT 30. PRESS REPORTS THAT SPEECH WILL CONCENTRATE ON TRANSPORT POLICY AND FOOD PRICES. DEBATE ON THRONE SPEECH REQUIRES EIGHT DAYS. IN ABSENCE OF BUDGET, DEFEAT OF WHICH PRECIPITATED JULY 8 ELECTION. GOVT MUST QUICKLY DEAL WITH "SUPPLY" PROVIDING FUNDS TO CONTINUE REGULAR OPERATION. A BUDGET MUST BE INTRODUCED AND REQUIRES SIX-DAY DEBATE. FIVE DAYS MUST BE ALLOTTED TO OPPOSITION MOTIONS. THIS LEAVES ONLY LIMITED TIME BEFORE CHRISTMAS RECESS FOR PRESSING BILLS SUCH AS PETROLUUM ADMINISTRATION ACT, GIVING LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY TO OIL EXPORT TAXES IMPOSED LAST WINTER; EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORP ACT; INCREASE IN PENSION BENEFITS; AND MANY OTHERS. JAMES JEROME, WHO WILL BE ELECTED SPEAKER, HAS SAID HE FAVORS SHORTENING OF DEBATES. HOWEVER, HE LACKS EXPERIENCE OF PREVIOUS SPEAKER LAMOUREUX AND REMAINS A LIBERAL MEMBER (LAMOUREUX RAN AS AN INDEPENDENT), AND IS THUS OPEN TO HARSH OPPOSITION CRITICISM IF HE APPEARS PARTISAN.

3. US INTERESTS. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ISSUES AFFECTING US INTERESTS WHICH COMMONS MAY EVENTUALLY HAVE TO CONFRONT. TAX CONCESSIONS GRANTED TIME AND READERS DIGEST; CROSS-BORDER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS; TRANSPORT PROBLMES, PARTICULARLY INVOLVING GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE; TRADE POLICY, ETC., MAY REQUIRE LEGISLATIVE ACTION. FOR NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS, HOWEVER, LEFT-OVER BUSINESS FROM LAST PARLIAMENT AND HOUSEKEEPING MATTERS PILED UP SINCE MAY 8 WHEN COMMONS DISSOLVED, WILL PROBABLY DOMINATE THE ORDER PAPER. SEVERAL OF THESE ISSUES WILL OFFER TEMPTING TARGETS DURING DAILY QUESTION PERIOD, HOWEVER, AND OPPOSITION WILL BE ABLE KEEP THEM ALIVE.

4. LIBERALS. LEGISLATIVE RECORD OF 1973-74 MINORITY GOVT
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OWNED MUCH TO CANNY FLOOR LEADERSHIP OF ALLAN MACEACHEN, NOW AT EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND REPLACED BY PREVIOUS EXTAFF MINISTER SHARP. LATTER IS ADMIRER FOR INTELLIGENCE AND JUDGMENT, BUT LACKS MACEACHEN'S CHARM AND POWERS OF PERSUASION, AND MAY HAVE PROBLEMS ORGANIZING COMPLICATED COMMONS SCHEDULE. THERE ARE ALSO INDICATIONS THAT TRUDEAU, WHO WAS OPENLY DISDAINFUL OF COMMON IN 1968-72, MAY FEEL HIS MAJORITY AGAIN ENTITLES HIM TO DOWNPLAY IMPORTANCE

OF PARLIAMENT. JEROME WAS NAMED SPEAKER WITHOUT TRADITIONAL CONSULTATIONS WITH OPPOSITION. PC HAS BEEN SHARPLY CRITICAL, AND HAS REFUSED TO SECOND NOMINATION, THOUGH TORIES WILL NOT OPPOSE HIS ELECTION. (NDP STILL CONSIDERING WHETHER THEY WILL OFFER TO SECOND JEROME). ANY HINT THAT TRUDEAU INTENDS DEGRADE ROLE OF COMMONS WILL QUICKLY RAISE TEMPER IN HOUSE.

4. CONSERVATIVES. PC HAS BEEN HAMPERED BY LACK OF UNITY AND FRICTION BETWEEN SUPPORTS OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER Diefenbaker AND OF STANFIELD. JOHN HORNER, A MAVERICK Diefenbaker SUPPORTER FROM ALBERTA, HAS THREATENED TO CREATE A NEW WESTERN PARTY, THOUGH HE HAS NO FOLLOWING OF CONSEQUENCE. HOWEVER, LAME-DUCK NATURE OF STANFIELD'S TENURE IN LEADERSHIP WILL PROBABLY MUTE DISSSENT IN TORY CAUCUS. THOUGH NO ONE HAS DECLARED CANDIDACY TO SUCCEED STANFIELD, THERE IS MUCH BACKSTAGE MANEUVERING, AND ASPIRANTS WILL BE ANXIOUS TO DEMONSTRATE COMMITMENT TO PARTY UNITY. FACING A SLIM MAJORITY GOVERNMENT, AND PROBABILITY THERE WILL BE NO ELECTION FOR AT LEAST FOUR YEARS, TORIES NEED NOT WORRY THAT STATEMENTS IN COMMONS WILL COMMIT FUTURE PC GOVERNMENT, AND DEBATE LIKELY BE MORE STRIDENT THAN IN PAST TWO YEARS. "SHADOW CABINET" INCLUDES SEVERAL POSSIBLE LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES WHO MAY SEEK HEADLINES IN ATTACKS ON GOVERNMENT.

5. NDP. NDP PLIGHT IS OBVIOUS. REDUCED TO 16 MEMBERS, THEY HAVE LOST NOT ONLY DAVID LEWIS WHO PERHAPS ABLEST PARLIAMENTARIAN IN LAST SESSION. BUT SEVERAL OTHER PRESTIGIOUS NAMES. BROADBENT'S LEADERSHIP IS UNKNOWN QUANTITY. NDP CAUCUS LACKS FORCEFUL DEBATERS, AND INCLUDES SEVERAL ELDERLY MEMBERS POSSIBLY IN LAST TERM. NDP NATIONAL DIRECTOR SCOTTON TOLD US DECISIONS CONFIDENTIAL

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ON ATTITUDE PARTY WILL TAKE HAVE YET TO BE MADE, AND NATIONAL CONVENTION WILL BE REQUIRED TO PICK UP PIECES.

6. SOCIAL CREDIT. TRUDEAU WILL PROBABLY INITIATE MEASURE TO GRANT SOCRED STATUS OF OPPOSITION PARTY. LEADER REAL CAQUETTE IS A POPULAR FIGURE, AND SOCRED DESPERATELY NEEDS RESEARCH OFFICE AND FUNDS ASSIGNED BY COMMONS TO OPPOSITION PARTIES. EVEN WITH OPPOSITION STATUS, HOWEVER, SOCRED WILL BE INCREASINGLY INEFFECTIVE. CAQUETTE'S HEALTH IS NOT GOOD, AND HIS SON (AND HEIR APPARENT AS LEADER) GILLES WAS DEFEATED. WITHOUT CAQUETTE'S SOCRED REPRESENTATION IS VERY WEAK.

7. CONCLUSION. ON FACE OF IT, LIBERALS APPEAR STRONG, UNITED, AND IN POSITION TO RUN 30TH PARLIAMENT TO THEIR

LIKING. ISSUES HAVE PILED UP DURING ALMOST FIVE MONTHS
WITHOUT PARLIAMENT, HOWEVER. LEGISLATION MAY BE REQUIRED
TO SETTLE SEVERAL DIFFICULT STRIKES; TORIES ARE NOT AT
ALL PREPARED PLAY DEAD; AND LONG LIST OF URGENT LEGIS-
LATIVE REQUIREMENTS WILL BE TAXING HOWEVER WELL ORGANIZED
AND PRESENTED. CHANCES ARE THIS SESSION WILL BE AT LEAST
AS STORMY AS LAST. PORTER

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